

# KERATOSIS PILARIS

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## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

A common skin disorder in which the openings of the hair follicles become filled with hard plugs. These are not contagious. Involved is the skin on the backs of upper arms, fronts of thighs or buttocks. It more often affects children and young adults.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Papules (small, raised bumps) with the following characteristics:

- Papules are small, firm and white, with a dry “sandpaper” feeling.
- Papules are clustered. Each one is about 1 mm in size.
- Papules are at the openings of hair follicles. They can be scooped out with the fingernails.
- When scooped out, a papule usually contains a coiled hair inside of white, semisolid material.
- Papules don’t itch or hurt.

### CAUSES

- Unknown, but it may be hereditary. These commonly occur in association with allergic dermatitis and several types of ichthyosis, both of which have strong hereditary links.
- Lesions similar (possibly identical) to those of keratosis pilaris appear in persons with vitamin A deficiency.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- History of skin allergies.
- Family history of keratosis pilaris.
- Poor nutrition, especially vitamin A deficiency.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Cannot be prevented at present.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Keratosis pilaris is a chronic, harmless skin problem with no permanent cure. Individual papules may come and go over a matter of weeks. All gradually disappear by age 30.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Secondary infection of papules.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Take long soaking tub baths.
- Use mild, unscented soap.
- Scrub gently with a stiff brush to remove the plugs in the follicles temporarily.
- Apply lubricating ointments or creams to the affected areas 6 or 7 times a day. The most useful time is immediately after bathing when lubrication helps the skin retain moisture.

### MEDICATIONS

Medicine usually is not necessary for this disorder.

### ACTIVITY

No restrictions.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

Signs of infection develop around the keratosis pilaris. Signs include pain or tenderness, redness, swelling and fever of 101° F (38.3° C) or higher.